

**United States Department of the Interior  
Heritage Conservation and Recreation Service**

**National Register of Historic Places  
Inventory—Nomination Form**

See instructions in *How to Complete National Register Forms*  
Type all entries—complete applicable sections

For HCRS use only

received MAY 11 1981

date entered JUN 11 1981

**1. Name**

historic Barnstable County Courthouse  
Barnstable County Superior Court House  
and/or common

**2. Location**

street & number Main Street (Route 6A)  not for publication

city, town Barnstable  vicinity of congressional district twelve

state Massachusetts code 025 county Barnstable code 001

**3. Classification**

Category	Ownership	Status	Present Use
<input type="checkbox"/> district	<input checked="" type="checkbox"/> public	<input checked="" type="checkbox"/> occupied	<input type="checkbox"/> agriculture
<input checked="" type="checkbox"/> building(s)	<input type="checkbox"/> private	<input type="checkbox"/> unoccupied	<input type="checkbox"/> commercial
<input type="checkbox"/> structure	<input type="checkbox"/> both	<input type="checkbox"/> work in progress	<input type="checkbox"/> educational
<input type="checkbox"/> site	<b>Public Acquisition</b>	<b>Accessible</b>	<input type="checkbox"/> entertainment
<input type="checkbox"/> object	<input type="checkbox"/> in process	<input checked="" type="checkbox"/> yes: restricted	<input checked="" type="checkbox"/> government
	<input type="checkbox"/> being considered	<input type="checkbox"/> yes: unrestricted	<input type="checkbox"/> industrial
		<input type="checkbox"/> no	<input type="checkbox"/> military
			<input type="checkbox"/> museum
			<input type="checkbox"/> park
			<input type="checkbox"/> private residence
			<input type="checkbox"/> religious
			<input type="checkbox"/> scientific
			<input type="checkbox"/> transportation
			<input type="checkbox"/> other:

**4. Owner of Property**

name County of Barnstable

street & number Main Street

city, town Barnstable  vicinity of state Massachusetts

**5. Location of Legal Description**

courthouse, registry of deeds, etc. Barnstable County Registry of Deeds

street & number Main Street

city, town Barnstable state Massachusetts

**6. Representation in Existing Surveys**

title Inventory of the Historic Assets of the Commonwealth #114  
has this property been determined eligible?  yes  no

date 1979  federal  state  county  local

depository for survey records Massachusetts Historical Commission

city, town Boston state Massachusetts

## 7. Description

<b>Condition</b>		<b>Check one</b>	<b>Check one</b>
<input type="checkbox"/> excellent	<input type="checkbox"/> deteriorated	<input type="checkbox"/> unaltered	<input checked="" type="checkbox"/> original site
<input checked="" type="checkbox"/> good	<input type="checkbox"/> ruins	<input checked="" type="checkbox"/> altered	<input type="checkbox"/> moved date _____
<input type="checkbox"/> fair	<input type="checkbox"/> unexposed		

### Describe the present and original (if known) physical appearance

The Barnstable County Courthouse is sited on a hill overlooking Barnstable Village and harbor and Cape Cod bay beyond. It is surrounded by approximately  $\frac{1}{4}$  acre of landscaped grounds dotted with a dozen large hardwood trees and two Revolutionary period cannons. A granite wall separates the sloping lawn from the village sidewalk. It was built in 1831/32 on the King's Highway, now the spine of the Old King's Highway Regional Historic District (local 1975). The imposing architectural character of this Greek Revival style building reflects its public institutional function and its primary role in the development of Barnstable County.

The original structure was rectangular in plan and rose two stories to a pitched roof. It is constructed of coursed rough faced Quincy granite with corner quoins of lighter gray granite. Fenestration throughout the building is regular and consists of 8/8 double hung sash at the first story and 12/12 double hung sash at the second story. The roof, originally covered with slate, is now asphalt shingle. Atop its front pitch is an eight column cupola with a copper cap set on a three tier base.

The most imposing feature of the courthouse is its correctly detailed Greek Doric portico. Four fluted columns support an entablature whose architrave bears the words "Barnstable County Court House" and whose frieze is detailed with triglyphs and metopes. A triangular pediment with raking cornice and mutules completes the composition. Although the portico appears to be constructed of granite it is actually fashioned of wood.

The only feature of the facade, behind the portico, is a generously scaled entry which appears to be a colonial revival addition. It consists of two eight paneled doors surmounted by first a glazed transom and then a solid transom. These elements are enframed by simple pilasters and a cornice which is supported on consoles. The entry is approached by three granite steps upon which the columns of the portico rest.

Additions to the building have included the following:

In 1897, a 24' by 26' south central wing was added. The architect was Samuel D. Kelley, the Bay State Brick Co. did much of the work. The interior floors and ceilings are of North River flagstone. All the rooms within the original courthouse and additions are fireproof with 400 pound metal doors dividing them. These doors are molded and studded with rosettes and fine hinges. All of the lumber used is spruce with the trusses of hard pine. A cellar was also included in this addition. As with all of the additions, Quincy granite, when available, was used in maintaining the texture and historical integrity of the outside facade.

In 1893, the area for the Registry of Deeds was determined to be too small an area. J. Williams Beal of Boston designed a one story, 40 square foot east wing. Portland cement and Quincy granite were again used.

In 1906, the Boston Museum of Fine Arts architect, Guy Lowell, of Boston, designed an accompanying 40 sq. foot two story west ell and a second story addition to the 1893

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Continuation sheet

Item number

7

Page

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east ell. The builders were Ernest L. Sampson of Plymouth, and Robert J. Ryder; the total cost was \$35,000. The west addition included a Probate Court room, and office for the Registry of Probate, and on the second floor was a law library, 16' by 36', the County Treasurer's office and the office of the District Attorney; below was the basement. The east wing consisted of two jury rooms, 16' by 18', rooms for the judges of the Superior and Supreme courts, an office for the County Sheriff and additional smaller rooms. This addition was also constructed with Quincy granite to conform with the rest of the structure's fabric. All slip window sills are also of granite with white pine double hung window frames.

In 1925; a southwest ell, 16' by 10' by 34'4" by 31'7" was added along with a southwest ell of 68'10" by 34'4" by 31'7". The general contractors were Somers and Drisko of Boston. All of these additions kept a well balanced appearance to the entire structure.

In 1972, G.H. Swart, Inc. of Barnstable, completed renovations in the Superior Court room and put on a south central addition of 48' by 17' to fill in between the 1925 east and west wings, the architect was Gafney Associates, Inc. At the rear of the building is a white central two column portico with two inside and two outside pilasters, cornice and parapet, the center of which displays an elaborate gold, blue/gray and off white County symbol. The steps leading up are sided by a handicap ramp.

The court room was rehabilitated with sensitivity, saving as much as possible of the original fabric and putting back into use objects that had long been stored in the basement. The traditional judge's bench, tables for the lawyers, and witness stand were all retained in their highly polished fine grained wood richness. And, a silver and tin codfish, symbol of the Commonwealth and Cape, hangs among four shining chandeliers from the center of this spacious and elegant Federal style court room. The long central barrel arched hallway of the 1832 building was extended and elaborated upon in the 1879 addition. The Court House is thus a splendid example of continual use with a rich air of tradition and history that is both alive and preserved.

A separate Registry of Deeds and Probate Court were built behind the Court house in 1955 and a District Court (first) on the east end of the County grounds was built in 1971. However, most of the County offices and the Superior Court are still in the main building.

## 8. Significance

Period	Areas of Significance—Check and justify below			
<input type="checkbox"/> prehistoric	<input type="checkbox"/> archeology-prehistoric	<input type="checkbox"/> community planning	<input type="checkbox"/> landscape architecture	<input type="checkbox"/> religion
<input type="checkbox"/> 1400-1499	<input type="checkbox"/> archeology-historic	<input type="checkbox"/> conservation	<input checked="" type="checkbox"/> law	<input type="checkbox"/> science
<input type="checkbox"/> 1500-1599	<input type="checkbox"/> agriculture	<input type="checkbox"/> economics	<input type="checkbox"/> literature	<input type="checkbox"/> sculpture
<input type="checkbox"/> 1600-1699	<input checked="" type="checkbox"/> architecture	<input type="checkbox"/> education	<input type="checkbox"/> military	<input type="checkbox"/> social/
<input type="checkbox"/> 1700-1799	<input type="checkbox"/> art	<input type="checkbox"/> engineering	<input type="checkbox"/> music	<input type="checkbox"/> humanitarian
<input checked="" type="checkbox"/> 1800-1899	<input type="checkbox"/> commerce	<input type="checkbox"/> exploration/settlement	<input type="checkbox"/> philosophy	<input type="checkbox"/> theater
<input type="checkbox"/> 1900-	<input type="checkbox"/> communications	<input type="checkbox"/> industry	<input checked="" type="checkbox"/> politics/government	<input type="checkbox"/> transportation
		<input type="checkbox"/> invention		<input type="checkbox"/> other (specify)

Specific dates 1831/32

Builder/Architect Jacob & Abner Taylor/ Alexander Parris

### Statement of Significance (in one paragraph)

The Barnstable County Courthouse possesses integrity of location, design, setting, materials, and workmanship and is significant on several levels. First, it has served as the seat of county government and justice since its construction in 1831 and therefore has played a role in many of the important events which have shaped the history of Cape Cod. Second, many of the county's most respected citizens have served at the Courthouse and even some nationally known lawyers like Daniel Webster have argued cases there. Finally, the Courthouse, which may have been designed by the well known architect, Alexander Parris, is a fine example of the monumental Greek Revival style. Therefore the Courthouse meets criteria A,B,and C of the National Register of Historic Places.

The first courthouse session on Cape Cod was held in Barnstable Village in 1686. The first Colonial Courthouse for the Cape was erected in 1774 in that village and is still standing. On the night of October 22, 1827, the Barnstable County House burned to the ground taking with it most deed and probate records. After this, the registers of deeds and probates, etc. kept these records in their homes. In 1828, arrangements were made for the erection of the present Superior Court. Ground was broken for it on November 7, 1831 and the building was completed by the following year. Now for the first time the offices of the court and the rest of the county could be combined. This was also the original office of the first County Commissioners; Mathew Cobb of Banstable, Samuel T. Crosswell of Falmouth, and Obed Brooks of Harwich. Their positions were created when in 1828 the old Courts of Sessions and the Commissioners of Highways were abolished by the legislature. Most county offices are still in this building.

Many of the Commonwealth's famous judges have sat there, including Barnstable native, Chief Justice Lemuel Shaw. And, they have heard cases argued by attorneys from all over the country, including the constant Cape visitor and Shaw associate, Daniel Webster. Robert "Bob" Ingersoll was also a Webster friend to appear before this bench. Among other lawyers to have argued there was Banstable native Zero Scudder, whose marble bust decorates the Court room was the only native lawyer to become a member of the Superior Court. Also of Barnstable was George Marston. He argued in this Court as County District Attorney and went on to become the Massachusetts Attorney General.

In addition to its historical significance in the fields of politics and government, the courthouse also possesses considerable architectural significance. It is a relatively early example of the Greek Revival style on Cape Cod and is thought to be the first with a full two story columned portico. Due to its highly visible public function, its monumental scale and its correct detail, the courthouse must have been instrumental in popularizing the Greek Revival style in the area. Design of the building is ascribed to Alexander Parris who is well known for his early works in granite and the Greek Revival style.

## 9. Map or Bibliographic References

Barnstable County Commissioners records.  
Seven Villages of Barnstable, Town of Barnstable, 1976.  
History of the County of Barnstable, Simeon L. Deyo, New York, 1890.  
Barnstable Patriot, 9/14/1831, p 2 & 12/7/1831, p. 2

## 10. Geographical Data

ACREAGE NOT VERIFIED

Acreege of nominated property less than one acre

Quadrangle name Hyannis

UTM NOT VERIFIED

Quadrangle scale 1:24000

UMT References

A 

1	9	3	9	1	4	3	10	4	6	1	7	2	3	10
Zone			Easting				Northing							

B 

Zone			Easting				Northing							

C 

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D 

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E 

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G 

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H 

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Verbal boundary description and justification

The nomination is confined to the historic courthouse and excludes modern structures on the lot. Please refer to the attached assessor's map.

List all states and counties for properties overlapping state or county boundaries

state code county code

state code county code

## 11. Form Prepared By

name/title Candace Jenkins, Registration Director with

Jack Clarke, Preservation Planner  
Cape Cod Planning Commission

organization Massachusetts Historical Commission

date April 1981

street & number 294 Washington Street

telephone 617-727-8470

city or town Boston

state Massachusetts

## 12. State Historic Preservation Officer Certification

The evaluated significance of this property within the state is:

national  state  local

As the designated State Historic Preservation Officer for the National Historic Preservation Act of 1966 (Public Law 89-665), I hereby nominate this property for inclusion in the National Register and certify that it has been evaluated according to the criteria and procedures set forth by the Heritage Conservation and Recreation Service.

State Historic Preservation Officer signature

*Patricia L. Weslowski*

title Executive Director, Massachusetts Historical Commission

date 5/1/81

For HCERS use only

I hereby certify that this property is included in the National Register

Entered in the

National Register

date 6.11.81

*for* *Delores Byers*  
Keeper of the National Register

Attest:

date

Chief of Registration

DUE 6/10/81 - 6/25/81  
dnr-3

Name Barnstable County Courthouse  
State, County MA Barnstable Fed Nom or Request-Agency \_\_\_\_\_  
Working Number 5.11.81.149 Federal Register Date 2.2.82

Nomination  
 Determination of Eligibility  
 On Nomination Form

Bldg(s)  
 Site  
 Object  
 Structure  
 District

Within:  
 Multiple Resource Area  
 Thematic Group

Maps 1,1  
Photos 1

Nomination prepared by:  
 State Staff  
 Local  
 Other

Action: <sup>Entered in the</sup> National Register  
 ACCEPT 6.11.81  
 RETURN \_\_\_\_\_  
 REJECT \_\_\_\_\_

Check if Appropriate:  
 State Request for Review  
 Keeper's Decision to Review  
 2nd Return

I. Evaluation of Resource (cont. on back if necessary)

II. Evaluation of Nomination

	Good	Adequate	Poor	Comments
1. Descriptive Statement Short Format <input type="checkbox"/> Yes <input type="checkbox"/> No				
2. Significance Statement Short Format <input type="checkbox"/> Yes <input type="checkbox"/> No				
3. Concepts/Integrity				
4. Concepts/Criteria				
5. Concepts/Boundaries				
6. Contextual Evaluation				

General Comments (cont. on back if necessary):

Reviewer/Date \_\_\_\_\_

See Attached \_\_\_\_\_



Barnstable County Courthouse  
Main Street  
Barnstable, Mass.

Jack Clarke  
Cape Cod Planning & Economic Development  
Commission

Photo #1 of 1  
Facade, facing southeast

*Barnstable  
County*

1980

MAY 11 1981  
JUN 11 1981

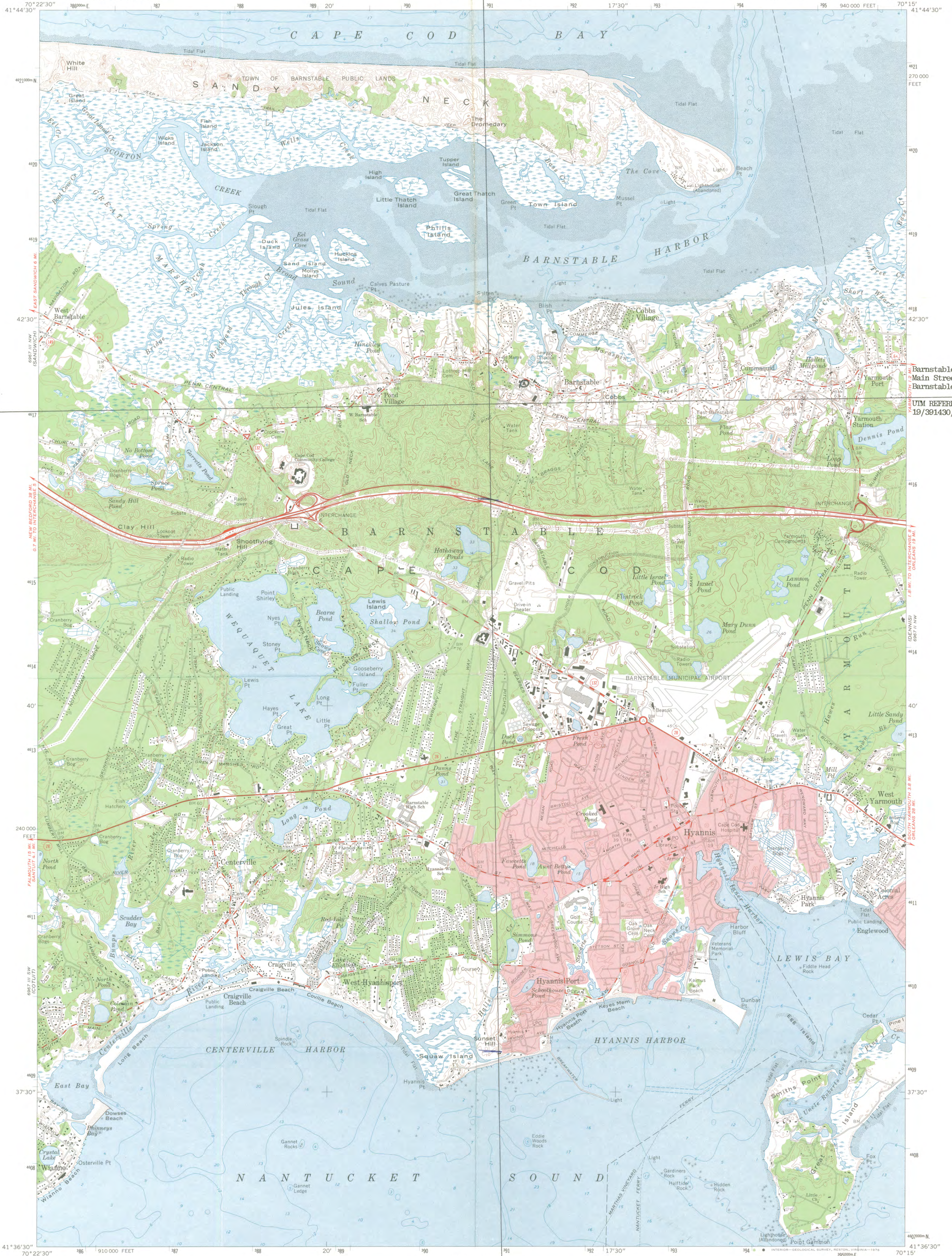
*County Court house*

*MA*

*12/80*

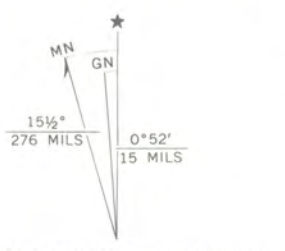
*Jack Clarke*

CAPE COD PLANNING  
AND ECONOMIC DEVELOPMENT COMMISSION  
1st DISTRICT COURT HOUSE  
BARNSTABLE, MASS. 02630



Barnstable County Courthouse  
Main Street  
Barnstable, Massachusetts  
UTM REFERENCES:  
19/391430/4617230

Mapped, edited, and published by the Geological Survey  
Control by USGS, NOS/NOAA, and Massachusetts Geodetic Survey  
Planimetry by photogrammetric methods from aerial photographs  
taken 1939. Topography by planetable surveys 1939  
Revised from aerial photographs taken 1973.  
Field checked 1974.  
Selected hydrographic data compiled from NOS 258 (1972)  
and 339 (1973). This information is not intended for navigational purposes  
Polyconic projection. 1927 North American datum  
10,000-foot grid based on Massachusetts coordinate system,  
mainland zone  
1000-metre Universal Transverse Mercator grid ticks, zone 19, shown in blue  
Boundaries in tidal water area from information furnished  
by Massachusetts Department of Public Works  
Red tint indicates areas in which only landmark buildings are shown



SCALE 1:24,000  
1000 0 1000 2000 3000 4000 5000 6000 7000 FEET  
1 0 1 2 3 4 5 6 7 8 9 10 KILOMETRE  
CONTOUR INTERVAL 10 FEET  
NATIONAL GEODETIC VERTICAL DATUM OF 1929  
DEPTH CURVES AND SOUNDINGS IN FEET—DATUM IS MEAN LOW WATER  
SHORELINE SHOWN REPRESENTS THE APPROXIMATE LINE OF MEAN HIGH WATER  
THE MEAN RANGE OF TIDE IS APPROXIMATELY 9.5 FEET  
IN CAPE COD BAY AND 3.1 FEET IN NANTUCKET SOUND  
THIS MAP COMPLIES WITH NATIONAL MAP ACCURACY STANDARDS  
FOR SALE BY U. S. GEOLOGICAL SURVEY, RESTON, VIRGINIA 22092  
A FOLDER DESCRIBING TOPOGRAPHIC MAPS AND SYMBOLS IS AVAILABLE ON REQUEST

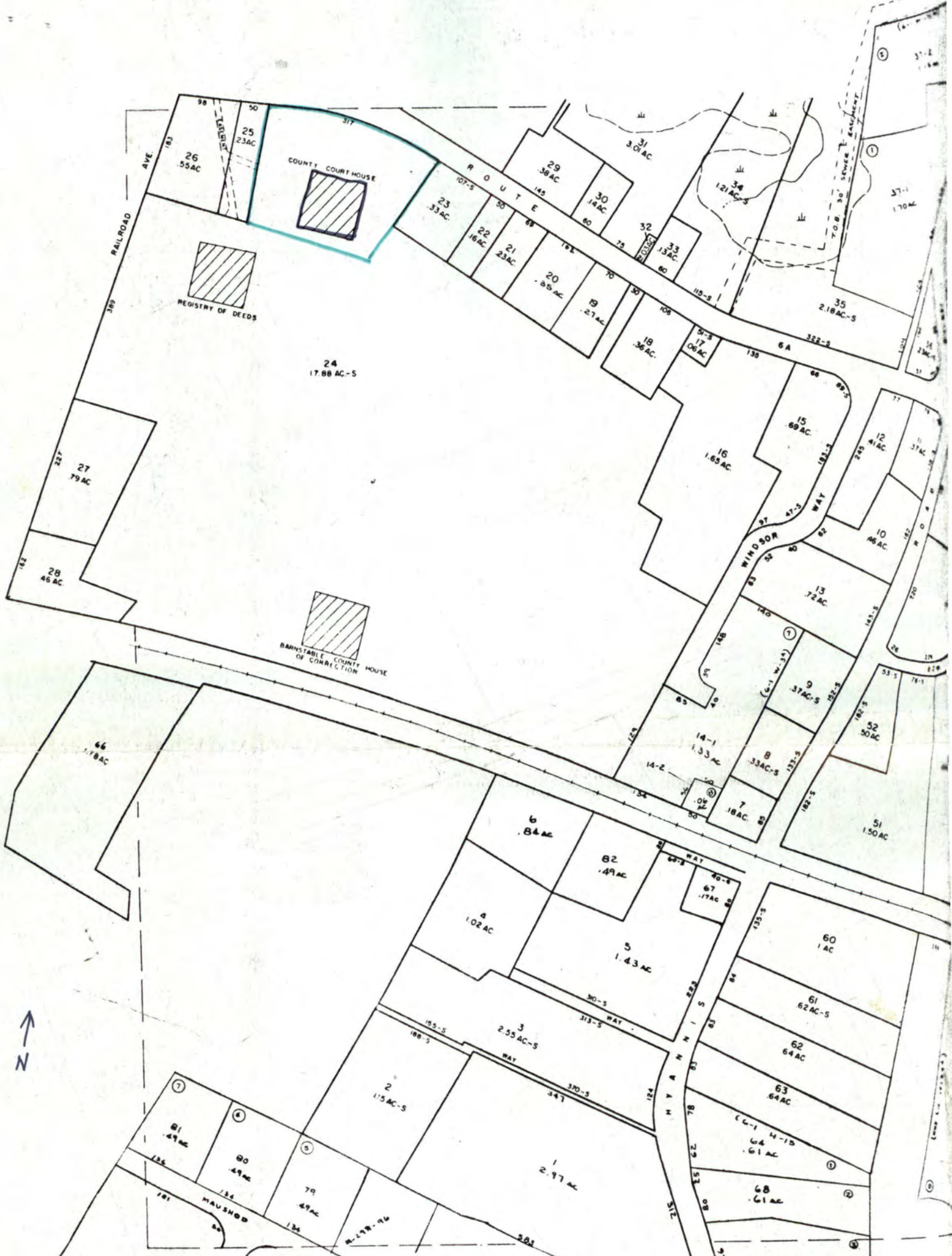


ROAD CLASSIFICATION  
Primary highway, hard surface  
Secondary highway, hard surface  
Unimproved road  
Light-duty road, hard or improved surface  
U. S. Route  
State Route



HYANNIS, MASS.  
N4136.5—W7015/8 X 7.5  
1974  
AMS 6967 III NE—SERIES V814





PREPARED UNDER THE DIRECTION OF THE  
 BARNSTABLE BOARD OF ASSESSORS  
 AVIS AIRMAP INC.  
 MASS. 1970 CONN.

589

Barnstable County Superior Court House  
 Assessor's map in Barnstable Town Hall, # 299.  
 1/2" = 100'



JUN 11 1981

MAY 11 1981



**MASSACHUSETTS  
HISTORICAL  
COMMISSION**

**COMMONWEALTH OF MASSACHUSETTS  
Office of the Secretary of State**

294 Washington Street  
Boston, Massachusetts  
02108  
617-727-8470

MICHAEL JOSEPH CONNOLLY  
Secretary of State

May 4, 1981

Mr. Jerry Rogers, Acting Keeper  
Registration Branch  
Heritage, Conservation & Recreation  
Service  
DOI, W434  
Washington D.C. 20243

Dear Mr. Rogers:

Enclosed you will find the following nomination forms for publicly owned buildings:

- Barnstable-Barnstable County Courthouse (state)
- Fall River-B.M.C. Durfee High School (local)
- Hull-Point Allerton Lifesaving Station (state)
- Lynn-Old Post Office (local)
- Weymouth-Fogg Library (local)

All have been voted eligible by the State Review Board and have been signed by the State Historic Preservation Officer.

Sincerely,

*Candace Jenkins*  
Candace Jenkins  
Registration Director



ENTRIES IN THE NATIONAL REGISTER

STATE MASSACHUSETTS

JUN 11 1981

Date Entered

<u>Name</u>	<u>Location</u>
Durfee, B. M. C., High School	Fall River Bristol County
Fogg Library	Weymouth Norfolk County
Barnstable County Courthouse	Barnstable Barnstable County
Point Allerton Lifesaving Station	Hull Plymouth County

Also Notified

Honorable Paul E. Tsongas

Honorable Edward M. Kennedy  
Honorable Margaret M. Heckler  
Honorable Gerry E. Studds  
Northeast Region, HCRS

State Historic Preservation Officer  
Mrs. Patricia L. Weslowski  
Executive Director |  
Massachusetts Historical Commission  
294 Washington Street  
Boston, Massachusetts 02108

[ NR

Eady/bjr/6/15/81

For further information, please call the National Register at (202)343-6401.